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Low Memorial Library

January 7, 1980

Robert K. Merton  
University Professor Emeritus  
and Special Service Professor  
415 Fayerweather Hall

Dear Bob:

Thank you for sharing Josh Lederberg's first report with me. Not since the death of Wolcott Gibbs have I encountered anyone whose enthusiasms so accurately predict my own as yours do. Josh's thoughtful reflections about what his institution is and must be suggest both a year and a life well spent. And his discussion of the role of private institutions in an age of government funding is especially trenchant.

There is one revealing omission, however. Josh never uses the word "teach" in any of its forms. There is a curious circumlocution at page eighteen: "This brings me to the University's traditional role--the support and preparation of gifted young people for scientific careers"; and a not so curious one at page three: "In addition, the University offers an opportunity for undistracted research, which is appealing to scientists who, at some institutions, might have to spend considerable time doing other things, useful and important but not directly related to their research." I have the feeling that, though Josh is delighted that his colleagues do not have to teach in the conventional sense, he is not altogether sure he should be bragging about it.

I don't want to let the beginning of the New Year pass without telling you that some of the warmest, most memorable moments that Joan and I spent in 1979 were with you and Harriet.

With fondest regards from us both,

As ever,

*Mike*  
Michael I. Sovern

MIS:mp